

## How to safely give medicines to children

**This information sheet will help you understand what you need to know when giving any medicine to an infant or child. It is not a substitute for talking with your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.**

Extra care is needed when giving medicine to an infant or child to make sure they get the correct dose. The following will help you get the dose right for your child.

- **Read the label on the medicine bottle or container**

Make sure you understand how much medicine to give and when the medicine can or should be given again. Ask your pharmacist if you are not sure.

- **Know the 'active ingredient'**

Know what the 'active ingredient' is (what makes the medicine work) and what it is used to treat.

The active ingredient may be used to treat different conditions and can be found in different medicines. There may also be more than one active ingredient in each medicine.

You don't want to accidentally double up.

- **Know your child's weight**

The dose given to your child should be based on weight rather than age. Calculating the amount of medicine your child needs is not always easy (see examples).

For prescription medicines, your doctor or pharmacist will work this out for you. For medicines you buy in the supermarket often only a range of doses is provided on the packaging.

Never guess the amount to give to your child or base it on the dose for an adult or another child. Never share medicines, even between siblings.

- **Measure liquid medicines accurately using an oral syringe or measuring spoon or cup**

Use the measuring device that comes with the medicine or ask your pharmacist for an oral syringe or measuring spoon or cup to get the right dose.

Do not use ordinary teaspoons as they do not give the correct amount.

- **Keep track of the medicines given**

Make sure you know what medicine has been given, when it was given and how much was given. Keeping a medicine diary for your child is a good idea, especially if they take multiple medicines.

Do not give more than the recommended daily dose. Do not give more often than recommended, even if your child seems sicker than last time.

- **Ask your healthcare professional if you are unsure**

If you are not sure about how much to give, how to measure medicines accurately or when to give another dose, ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist for help.

**Remember to store all medicines in a safe place, out of reach and sight of children.**

**Some, but not all medicines, need to be kept in the fridge. Check this with your pharmacist.**

### Examples of oral liquid medicines where dose calculation may be needed.

Medicine	Dose calculation
Ibuprofen (This is available as one strength – 100 mg/5 mL)	20–30 mg/kg/day, divided into three or four doses. In children weighing less than 30 kg, the maximum total daily dose should not exceed 500 mg.  For example, if the child weighs 15 kg and the suspension available is 100 mg/5 mL: 15 kg x 20 mg = 300 mg/day 300 mg ÷ 100 mg = 3 doses of 5 mL can be given over 24 hours.
Paracetamol (Please note there are two strengths available – 120 mg/5 mL and 250 mg/5 mL)  Do not rely on smell or taste	15 mg/kg, every four to six hours, with a maximum of four doses in 24 hours.  For example, if the child weighs 12 kg and the suspension available is 120 mg/5 mL: 12 kg x 15 mg = 180 mg/dose 180 mg ÷ 120 mg = 1.5 x 5 mL = 7.5 mL per dose, maximum of four times in 24 hours.